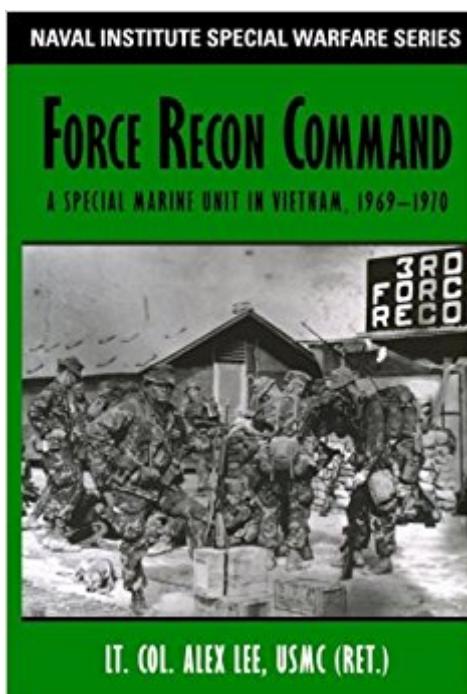


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Force Recon Command: A Special Marine Unit In Vietnam, 1969-1970 (Naval Institute Special Warfare Series)



Synopsis

THE A SHAU VALLEYWHERE THE NVA WAS KING . . . In order to prevent surprise attacks on U.S. forces as they were pulling out of Vietnam, someone had to be able to pinpoint the NVA's movements. That dangerous job was the assignment of then-major Alex Lee and the Marines of the 3rd Force Reconnaissance Company when he assumed command in late 1969. They became the tip of the spear for Lt. Gen. Herman Nickerson's III MAF. And each time one of Lee's small, well-motivated, well-led, and wildly outnumbered teams was airlifted into the field, the men never knew if the day would end violently. But whether tracking NVA movements, recovering downed air crews, or making bomb-damage assessments after B-52 strikes, Major Lee's Few Good Men never forgot who they were: Each of them was in Vietnam to live like a Marine, win like a Marine, and, if need be, die like a Marine. Forthright and unabashed, Lieutenant Colonel Lee leaves no controversy untouched and no awe-inspiring tale untold in this gripping account of 3rd Force Recon's self-sacrifice and heroic achievement in the face of overwhelming odds. --This text refers to the Mass Market Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

Alex Lee commanded the Third Force Reconnaissance Company in Vietnam from 1969 to 1970. Made up of small units of specially trained U. S. Marines, that company conducted long-range patrols deep in Northern I Corps (including the infamous Ashau Valley) to gather intelligence about the North Vietnamese Army. An intelligent effective operator who led by example, Lee was also

brash and excruciatingly honest, and in this controversial, no-hold-barred account, he takes the wraps off this select group of courageous and intrepid Marines. A master storyteller, the colonel leads the reader through harrowing, and often deadly missions in the enemy-dominated Ashau, where the Recon Marines were always vastly outnumbered and support was miles away. Days of silent observation could, and often did, erupt into savage, running firefights and hot extractions. With the sensibility of a novelist, Lee brings vividly to life the spirit and character of his Force Recon Marines and the deadly jungle that was both friend and foe. More than a memoir of Vietnam war stories, this rank and absorbing chronicle traces the evolution of marine small unit reconnaissance from its origins in World War II, analyses its use and abuse in Vietnam, and offers a provocative but useful legacy of lessons learned from a career dedicated to an elite within the elite. Lee tells it like it was, sparing none of the acid that alienated many and ended his stellar military career. -- Midwest Book Review

THE A SHAU VALLEYWHERE THE NVA WAS KING . . . In order to prevent surprise attacks on U.S. forces as they were pulling out of Vietnam, someone had to be able to pinpoint the NVA's movements. That dangerous job was the assignment of then-major Alex Lee and the Marines of the 3rd Force Reconnaissance Company when he assumed command in late 1969. They became the tip of the spear for Lt. Gen. Herman Nickerson's III MAF. And each time one of Lee's small, well-motivated, well-led, and wildly outnumbered teams was airlifted into the field, the men never knew if the day would end violently. But whether tracking NVA movements, recovering downed air crews, or making bomb-damage assessments after B-52 strikes, Major Lee's Few Good Men never forgot who they were: Each of them was in Vietnam to live like a Marine, win like a Marine, and, if need be, die like a Marine. Forthright and unabashed, Lieutenant Colonel Lee leaves no controversy untouched and no awe-inspiring tale untold in this gripping account of 3rd Force Recon's self-sacrifice and heroic achievement in the face of overwhelming odds. --This text refers to the Mass Market Paperback edition.

A hard-hitting, truth-telling Marine Corps Officer's diary, if you will, of combining knowledge, experimentation, leadership and the determination to ensure success for his Marines in conducting extremely dangerous and difficult missions in reconnaissance warfare. From the beginning as an officer detailed to try new techniques for success in long-range reconnaissance at the Marine Corps Development Center, to leading Marines in application of these techniques along with his on-the-ground participation, the Third Force Recon Company provided on-going tactical information

about the North Vietnamese Army units' movements and strengths of those units in South Vietnam. The information was critical for Marine and Army units occupying and operating in the northern sector of South Vietnam. The author provides examples of higher unit commanders and staff officers interfering with the company's missions, especially in the latter stages of the conflict. But, as a leader, he fought for the Marines of his unit to isolate them from the uninformed, meddling higher ranking officers that lacked knowledge of the company's contributions to the war.

A. Lee was a terrific warrior and all that he and his men did in the final months of the Marine time in Vietnam is well said. A 'character' himself, Lee describes so many of his Marines in a way that destroys the usual public perception of our Marines in Vietnam. What a great cast of characters! My time as a grunt ran from March '66 to August '68 and although I was a humble grunt leader, not of the elite of Force Recon, 'meeting' these Marines was a joy. Much time is given to how difficult it was to get passed all the "help" that higher headquarters insisted on providing. A. Lee relates much of the frustration and often futility of trying to educate staff pukes so that your Marines could do the job right.

Very good book telling the story of 3d Force Recon Co during the period 69-70. It covered the leadership, events, how things were done very well. However, I found it in my view to be written by a Marine with a chip on his shoulder and who probably caused much of his problems by not showing the friendship and leadership needed to effect better relationships between his and other Marine commands. He also didn't seem to understand why the Marine Corps had so many different MOS's which were of course needed to keep fighting units and recon units operating. If he did he showed little respect for those in the supporting units. Marine serve in the jobs they are selected to serve and go where they are ordered. But his unit did serve well in spite of the political mismanagement by our government and the climate which had both bad race relationships edged on by race baiting bad leadership and the lack of support by the American people for our military. I served in the Marine Corps during that period as part of my 25 year career as well as served in Vietnam in 67-68.

LT COL Lee tells a trying story of actual recon operations on the ground by very courageous and brave men fighting a war they were winning but realizing the politicians and the politically correct leadership were giving victory away. He lays out the details of how a six man team is inserted, conducted and extracted. He describes the detailed Checklists and detailed pre-combat checks and battle drills that enabled the teams to succeed and excel. We owe a deep gratitude to all these

marines. I understand his disdain for higher headquarters having seen it for myself albeit in peacetime. A great read and highly recommended.

Being in an entirely different area of the Corps (Amtrac Maintenance) I had many an occasion to work with some very smart and motivated Recon Marines throughout my 22 year career and saw first hand the way they were treated and the disdain of there special abilities and professionalism, being a senior enlisted man and filling officer billets from the time I was a buck Sgt to the rank of Msgt where I retired, I encountered more senior personnel with lack of knowledge, leadership abilities and lack of tact my last 10 years that it made me call it quits, I am not saying there are not still quality leaders and professionalism out there, but the bad seem to out number the good, Semper Fi !

Alex Lee details for us the birth and eventual Independence of 3rd Force Recon in Vietnam 1969 - 1970. Operating in the far north of I corps up too, and into the DMZ, Mr. Lee details specific missions and their inherent dangers.Mr. Lee also details, with amazing clarity, what it took to shape this force from, pretty much, the ground up into a formidable LRRP unit. His training and credentials alone explain how they become a top notch, stowed away, professional type unit operating in one of the most hostile places on earth at that time. It seems Mr. Lee was constantly fighting, not only the enemy but his own administrative command to get the things needed to ensure a) success and b) survival. Most of the equipment seemed to come from clandestine means by way of bartering, favors owed and favors offered.He details how he hand chose his staff, how some of his best staff came by way of seemingly divine intervention at precisely the right time and, how he and his staff turned the unit into a dedicated force with the welfare of each man top priority.Details of the missions and the conditions leave you wondering so many things. I especially liked the chapters detailing interactions with the pencil pushers and the overreach of Washington. He describes how the unit would nod approval of the orders no matter how asinine but, given that these same orders would jeopardize lives, Mr. Lee chose not to carry out operational changes directed from 13,000 miles away. A very smart and tough leader who had the welfare of his Marines as number one priority. Definitely the man you want leading you as you know, 100%, he has your back.As the war wound down for USA, 3rd Force came home unsung heroes. It's a great piece of history told by a dedicated Marine Corps leader. Highly recommended for Historical, Vietnam, military and Marine corps fans.

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